(d) the reasons for not starting of execution of this project; and

(e) the revised programme of execution of this project with its present status?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (DR. DEBENDRA PRADHAN): (a) and (b) Kandla Port Trust had a proposal for widening of Kandla-Kharirohar Road (K.K. Road) into four-lane from the junction of National Highway No. 8-A at Gandhidham to Oil Jetty Area at Kandla, in a length of 12 Kms. Besides, the scheme involved construction of bridge over Nakti Creek and construction of one No. of Rail-Over-Bridge (R.O.B.) on the said road.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) and (e) On reviewing the traffic scenario, the Kandla Port has now reduced the scope of work to rehabilitating the existing deteriorated two lane K.K. Road by providing a layer of Asphalt Carpet and constructing a bridge over Nakti Creek. The Port proposes to execute this work through National Highways Authority of India (N.H.A.I).

Modifications of National Highways Development Bill

3325. SHRI R. S. GAVAI: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to modify the National Highways Development (Fund and Cess) Bill to include the 50 paise tranche of Re. 1 cess per litre of diesel and petrol meant for rural development;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps proposed by Government for development of roads in the rural areas?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (DR. DEBENDRA PRADHAN): (a) to (c) The Central Road Fund Bill is at a preliminary stage. It has however been decided that out of the total cess levied on High Speed Diesel and Petrol, 50 per cent of the cess levied on High Speed Diesel will be transferred to Ministry of Rural Development for developing rural roads.

Infrastructure status for Shipping Industry

3326. SHRI ANANTA SETHI: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether his Ministry has set up an expert group to go into the question of granting infrastructure status to the shipping industry.

(b) if so, the time by which the expert group is expected to submit its report; and

(c) the steps which are being taken by his Ministry to help the shipping industry go physically and technologically?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (DR. DEBENDRA PRADHAN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) The following proposals have been initiated by this Ministry to help the shipping industry;

(a) Restoration of section 33AC of Income Tax Act;

(b) Enhancement of depreciation from 20% to 40%;

(c) Tax relief to Indian seafarers; and

(d) Coastal shipping must be declared as an infrastructure industry.

Expansion of fleet by SCI

3327. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Shipping Corporation of India has drawn up a Rs. 567 crore plan for adding another 16 ships to its fleet;

(b) if so, from which source SCI would manage to obtain such a huge amount for acquiring new ships;

(c) whether it is a fact that SCI's plan had suffered during the Ninth Plan and its share in the Indian Shipping tonnage came down from 50 per cent to 43 per cent in the last three years; and

(d) if so, what are SCI's new investment plans for getting a better price for its shares?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (DR. DEBENDRA PRADHAN): (a) Yes, Sir.